

Survey reveals local concern for water quality, but lack of information

By Greg Larson

Three quarters of local residents are aware of water quality concerns in East Canyon Creek and Silver Creek, and seventy-eight percent feel that storm water pollution in the area is a serious issue, but almost as many residents don't know what happens to storm water after it disappears into the closest storm drain. In addition, most residents feel that water quantity in our creeks is less important than water quality, despite the fact that the two are inseparably linked.

These insights, and many others useful to local planners and educators, were provided by a recent survey of over 200 adult residents in the 84060, 84068, and 84098 zip codes. The survey was conducted on behalf of the East Canyon Watershed Committee and Swaner Nature Preserve.

"I am truly grateful to all of the residents who participated in this survey," says Tina Quayle, the Executive Director at Swaner Nature Preserve, adding that "the results of this survey will allow us to get the best possible information to folks who want to help improve the water quantity and quality in our local creeks and streams." In fact, Swaner Nature Preserve and the East Canyon Watershed Committee plan to roll out an extensive public education campaign in the coming months based on the results of the survey.

The campaign is likely to start by educating residents about storm water and where it flows. Storm water flowing off of lawns, golf courses, streets, and construction sites is thought to be a major contributor of nutrients and sediment to local streams. Nutrients have wreaked havoc on East Canyon Creek in recent years, feeding excessive growth of aquatic plants, which in turn has reduced the oxygen available to trout and other aquatic species.

"We hope that by letting the public know that storm water flows directly into local creeks, and by suggesting some simple behavior changes, we can see measurable changes to water quality" says Mary Perry, of the group Friends of East Canyon Creek and also a member of the East Canyon Creek Committee. Some of the suggestions include careful application of fertilizer, use of native and low-water landscaping, and diligent cleaning up of dog waste.

Over half of the residents surveyed own at least one dog, and half of the dog owners regularly walk their dogs along creek trails. The survey, which represents over 20,000 residents (with a +/- 7% error), indicated that at least 5,900 dogs are regularly visiting creek corridors, and that the waste of more than 800 dogs regularly ends up along our

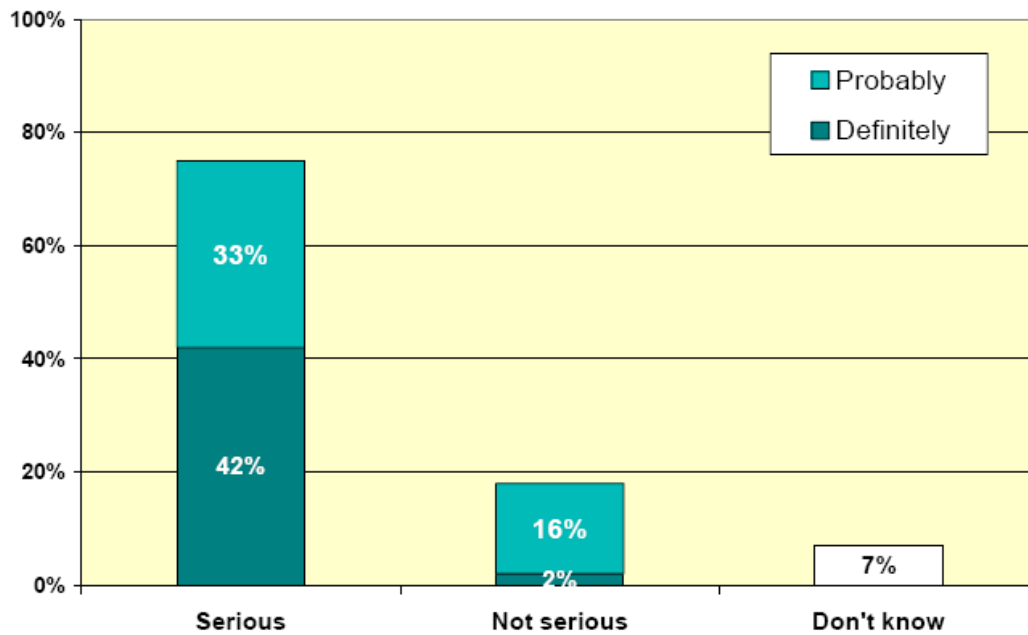
local creeks. Thus, educating dog owners about the detrimental effects of their pets' waste on local creeks will be a vital component of the campaign.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the campaign, and the most important, will be educating residents how important the amount of water in a creek is to its water quality. As Mike Luers, General Manager of the Snyderville Basin Water Reclamation District explains, "The most serious problem facing the creek is water quantity or the lack of water. Conserving water in the [East Canyon] watershed is essential to improving its water quality." Because nutrients and other pollutants are less diluted during periods of abnormally low flow, the amount of water left in the creek during the summer irrigation season is critically important to the quality of water during those periods. Low flow also produces higher water temperatures and shallow water, which both exacerbate the low oxygen concentrations in the stream

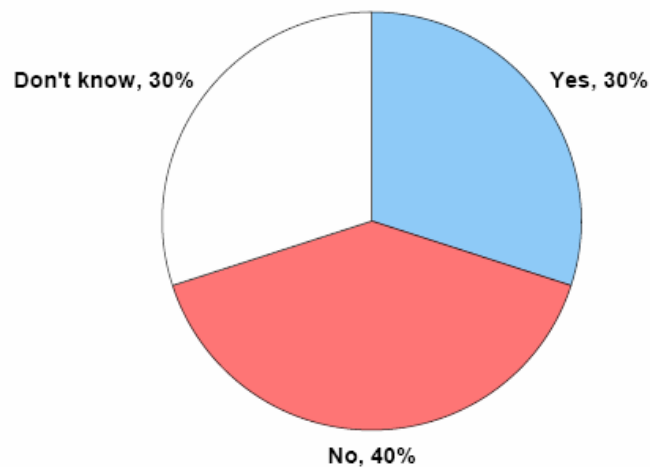
"As Park City continues to grow and water becomes increasingly scarce, educating our community about ways to reduce pollution and conserve water will become vitally important," says Tina Quayle. Indeed, with the population of Park City on pace to double or even triple within several decades, an informed community is perhaps the only way to protect the health of our local creeks.

Those interested in learning more about the challenges facing East Canyon Creek and its tributaries can visit www.eastcanyoncreek.org. To get involved with the education campaign or to volunteer, you can email admin@swanernature.org. The author is the Education and Land Manager at Swaner Nature Preserve.

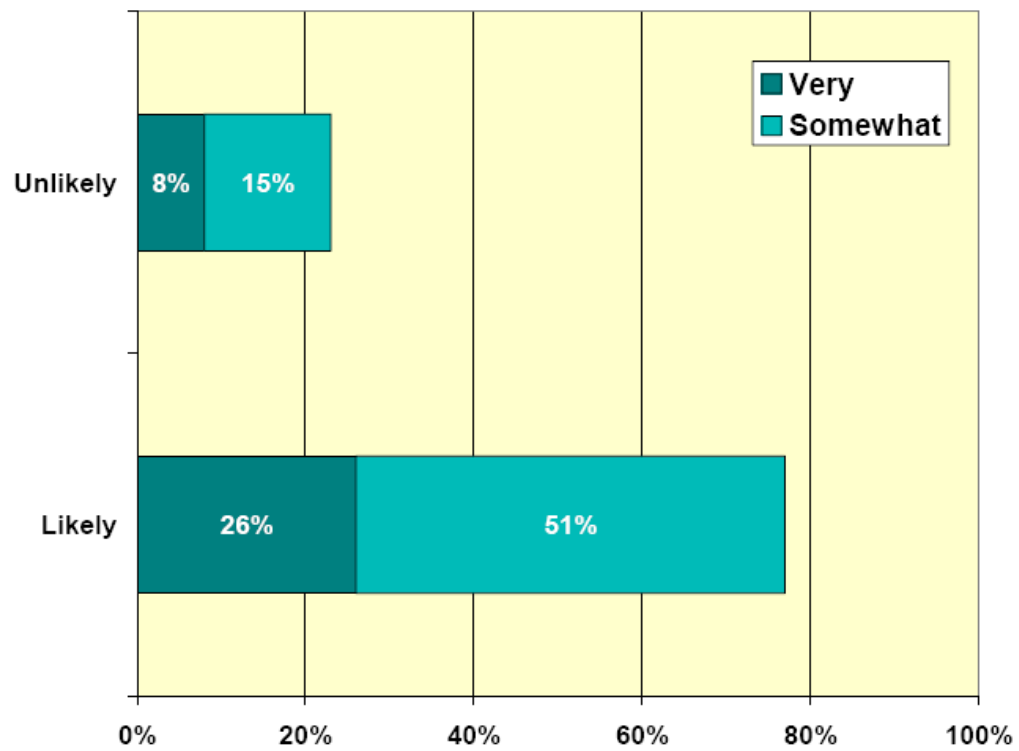
Question 36. Do you feel overall water quality of local creeks and streams in the Snyderville Basin area or Park City area is a serious issue?



Question 39. STORM WATER is the water from rain, melted snow, and sleet....from what you know or have heard, does neighborhood storm water go to a treatment plant?



Question 54. If new ideas were given about ways to prevent stream, creek, and storm water pollution, how likely do you think people would be to change their habits?



Question 60. And, in your opinion, which issue is more important... (READ AND ROTATE RESPONSES)

